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In re Application of
Learned III
Application No. 09/233,805
Filed: March 10, 1998
For: ISOKINETIC PAINT BRUSH HANDLES

ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed , to revive the above-identified application.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any request for reconsideration or petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)." This is **not** a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to submit formal drawings in a timely manner in reply to the Notice of Allowability mailed September 24, 1999, which set a shortened statutory period for reply of three (3) months. No extensions of time under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a) were obtained. Accordingly, the above-identified application became abandoned on December 25, 1999. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed on May 16, 2000.

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)[1] must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply,[2] unless previously filed; (2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(l); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer required by 37 CFR 1.137(c).

The instant petition lacks item (3).

As to item (3), the showing of record is not sufficient to establish to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(a).

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[1] As amended effective December 1, 1997. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. 53131, 53194-95 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 63, 119-20 (October 21, 1997).

[2] In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

The Commissioner is responsible for determining the standard for unavoidable delay and for applying that standard

35 USC 133 states, "Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Commissioner in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that such delay was unavoidable." (emphasis added)

"In the specialized field of patent law, ... the Commissioner of Patent and Trademarks is primarily responsible for the application and enforcement of the various narrow and technical statutory and regulatory provisions. His interpretation of those provisions is entitled to considerable deference."[3]

The standard

"[T]he question of whether an applicant's delay in prosecuting an application was unavoidable must be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking all of the facts and circumstances into account."[4] The general question asked by the Office is: "Did petitioner act as a reasonable and prudent person in relation to his most important business?"[5] Nonawareness of a PTO rule will not constitute unavoidable delay.[6]

Application of the standard to the current facts and circumstances

Petitioner contends that the Notice of Allowability, mailed September 24, 1999, was never received (first page of petition). However, petitioner has failed to state that he has made a search of the entire file jacket and failed to discuss his procedure for handling incoming mail. What steps took place once mail was received in the post office box? Was it immediately placed in the file? Who handled the mail? Petitioner should establish that reasonable steps were in place to ensure that mail was not lost by petitioner.

When did petitioner first discover the existence of the Notice of Allowability and that the application was abandoned? Why did petitioner take so long to file a petition to revive?

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

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[3] Rydeen v. Quigg, 748 F.Supp. 900, 904, 16 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA)1876 (D.D.C. 1990), aff'd without opinion (Rule 36), 937 F.2d 623 (Fed. Cir. 1991) (citing Morganroth v. Quigg, 885 F.2d 843, 848, 12 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1989); Ethicon, Inc. v. Quigg, 849 F.2d 1422, 1425, 7 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1152 (Fed. Cir. 1988) ("an agency' interpretation of a statute it administers is entitled to deference"); see also Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc., 467 U.S. 837, 844, 81 L. Ed. 694, 104 S. Ct. 2778 (1984) ("if the statute is silent or ambiguous with respect to the specific issue, the question for the court is whether the agency's answer is based on a permissible construction of the statute."))

[4] Id.

[5] See In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497 (D.C. Cir. 1912).

[6] See Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 977 (Fed. Cir. 1982) (citing Potter v. Dann, 201 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 574 (D. D.C. 1978) for the proposition that counsel's nonawareness of PTO rules does not constitute " unavoidable" delay)). Although court decisions have only addressed the issue of lack of knowledge of an attorney, there is no reason to expect a different result due to lack of knowledge on the part of a pro se (one who prosecutes on his own) applicant. It would be inequitable for a court to determine that a client who spends his hard earned money on an attorney who happens not to know a specific rule should be held to a higher standard than a pro se applicant who makes (or is forced to make) the decision to file the application without assistance of counsel.

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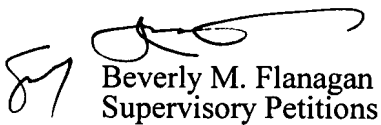

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